

(Public Hearing, Hamilton, Montana, October 1, 1997)

ALLAN WALTERS: Thank you. I'm Allan Walters, House District 60. I represent the area of Hamilton, Corvalis, Pinesdale and the rural area in between. Obviously, I can't speak for all my constituents on this subject because we know we do have a

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divided -- people are divided on this subject.

However, I do believe I speak for the vast majority of the citizens in this area when I say that I'm opposed to the reintroduction of grizzly bears because of the many reasons already stated. Number one being the loss of habitat which will mean that the bears will not stay where they're put. They will be down. We've already seen that. I've had one in the Pinesdale area. We had a boy who was dragged off his porch while he was sleeping overnight by a black bear and received severe injuries from that bear.

There will be livestock damage. There will be animals destroyed. There will be loss of use because we're going to be not able to use the woods. They'll be -- when there's a conflict, we know they're going to be areas closed -- they'll be areas closed to hunting. As a hunter myself, I already am watchful for -- we have a great many mountain lions in this area. If we want predators, we already have them. We have lots of mountain lions.

And we really don't need to spend this money. It seems like -- I heard a thing a while back, it said, "If it's not broke, don't fix it." And I don't really see what the problem is. We haven't had grizzlies for 60 years. Why -- what's the big problem

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that we suddenly need grizzly bears here.

I know that a lot of people feel like they were here before and so we should have them again. But I must also remind you that when our forefathers came to this country, that malaria was ramped on the East Coast, and if we could reintroduce malaria on the East Coast, I would be glad to make a contribution to that effect. And we can then again have a reintroduced species on the East Coast.

I really am not opposed to grizzly bear reintroduction. Just don't do it here. Let's do it someplace else. And that's all I have. Thank you.